

Effect of colonialism on gender equality relating to the brief wondrous life of o...

[Government](#), [Colonialism](#)



When it comes to delegating responsibility, allocating power, and demanding equality, there always seems to be an underlying bias towards the masculine sector of society, which allows an imbalance regarding gender equality. Understanding where this way of thinking comes from is an essential part of trying to shift and completely erase the bias. Throughout history, a patriarchal pattern and way of thinking has been passed down from generation to generation; what we fail to see is the reason for this pattern and the ways in which we can remedy the situation.

A great example of this issue is displayed in the novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, by Junot Diaz. The female characters of Junot Diaz's novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, La Inca, Beli, and Lola, demonstrate the ways in which colonialism led to the dehumanization of citizens, especially women, and how these power dynamics carry over into modern society in relationships between the majority and minority, both in terms of race and gender in their oppression and the stigma that is attached to being a Dominican immigrant women in America. There are three important women in the novel: La Inca, Beli, and Lola.

Each are strong women who battle each other, men, the fuku, their past, their color, and--most important the fact that they are women. One can argue that this habit of undermining the female population comes all the way from when colonialism began to take place. Not only did this Western idea of colonizing mean degrading those that were more, barbaric and unfortunate. "... we must study how colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him

to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism. (Cesaire 35) But it was from this that the idea of judging humans by their appearance came about and began to exist. Prior to this the idea of looking and judging by color, gender and physical appearance was non-existent. What we fail to see as a society is the realness of this matter, the fact that still in the 21st century this idea of inequality hits almost every single female in one way or another, affecting even the capability to sustain themselves economically because of the still present gender gap in salary wages. This struggle is specifically seen in foreign females residing in America.

Junot Diaz in his novel very craftily, with much use of heteroglossia- the presence of two or more voices, discourses, or expressed viewpoints in a text or other artistic work and uncensored truth displays this with his female characters. Lola, represents the first generation American Hipic female who struggles with finding a balance of her pishcultureand the urge of freeing herself from the stereotype she is expected to uphold. In her journey to oppose such characterization, and as a modern Dominican girl she could only push and dream on. “ with promises that once I reached college I would be able to do whatever I pleased, burst out.

I couldn't help it... It was a message more than a feeling, a message that tolled like a bell: change, change, change. ” (Diaz 58) This feeling of hope is what drives and keeps many women working hard and pushing for positive changes still to this day. But the constant tag of war with essentialism- belief that a group of pe2ople exhibit traits, characteristics, or behaviors that are

essential to their nature and membership to that group, is what drove Lola to the verge of insanity. " What it's like to be the perfect Dominican daughter, which is just a nice way of saying Dominican slave. (Diaz 56) She fought like a mad cat for justice, freedom and opportunities. Basic human rights, but not for the average foreign female in the U. S. Her battle was seen as her " crazy years.. what Dominican girl doesn't have those? " (Diaz 24) Her sense of independence and bravery is taken and classified just merely because she is an ethnic female. " She'd turned into one of those Jersey dominicanas, a long distance runner who drove her own car, had her own checkbook, called men bitches, and would eat a fat cat in front of you without a speck of verguena. (Diaz 25) To call such attitude honorable would be out of the question because to society she is stepping out of what her stereotype is suppose to be.

On the other hand, feminism to traditional La Inca was never even a thought. La Inca is part of the female group that accepts the oppression and her given expected role in society. Instead of fighting against it she lives her entire life trying to maintain and protect her assigned role " La Inca, you see, was a serious woman, an upstanding woman, one of the best in her class. (Diaz 102) She fought hard to keep the status of her family up high, she is the result of a woman from a colonized country. She knows nothing more than what she is given and refuses and is scared to venture. La Inca is the traditional dominican mom, her only wish was for her daughter, Beli to succeed and achieve what she could not. But like many traditional mothers she wanted her daughter to stay rooted in her culture, just the mere thoughts of Beli going to the " extranjero" brought her anger " The U. S. was nothing more

and nothing less than a pais overrun by gangsters, putas, and no-accounts. (Diaz 158) La Inca lives by what society has taught her to be, to do things for the well being of the men in society, to take care of the home but more importantly to stay at the bottom of the chain and not even think about fighting it. The fight against what colonialism has built the female population to be was started thanks to women like Beli. She represent the females who were tired of living the role they were given.

“ Beli could no longer abide working at the bakery or being the “ daughter” of one of the “ most upstanding women in Bani. ” She could not abide, period... hat she wanted, more than anything, was what she’d always wanted throughout her LostChildhood: to escape. ” (Diaz 80) She was able to detach herself and learn that there is more to life than what she was told. It is thanks to females like her that we are becoming aware of how far down colonialism has push females. That the “ worship of women as objects of chivalric adoration” (Kaplan 107) should not be, society makes females feel “ invited to imagine themselves participating in the adventures of empire as a means of rejoicing traditional roles. (Kaplan 110) This is what the support of imperial conquest has created. Hypatia Belicia Cabral, a lost dominican single mother in the U. S trying to escape from the culture that expects her to fulfill a given role. Colonialism allowed the lessening of a person just because of an aspect of their look or status.

Just as Aime Cesaire states, “.. while colonialism in its formal sense might have been dismantled, the colonial state has not. Many of the problems of democracy are products of the old colonial state whose primary difference is

the presence of black faces. (Cesaire 27) This being a clear example of Oscar, who even in a new country with endless possibilities to succeed still drags on with him that curse of fuku and the result of colonialism as his cross which leads him to find a way to not succeed. Judged by his skin color and his constant battle of achieving the mastering of this male chauvinism, that also came as a result of colonialism and its oppression of woman. The reality is that colonization taught human beings to “ dehumanizes even the most civilized man. ” (Cesaire 41) It allowed this concept of “ ownership” and superiority of a race against another- creating an evil chain.

Wealthy men were the owners of less fortunate men, and as a result of chauvinism, men were the owners of women. “ Colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform himself into an animal. (Cesaire 27) Colonialism began to build a pyramid of levels of importance in society, placing wealthy men at the top following by the rest of the men population and lastly are those wealthy and educated woman; that regardless how hard they try could never climb up the set social cast as we see in the battle of Lola against this very restricted stereotype she gets casted into. Although many of these casted minorities move to the United States in search of freedom and equality, as Beli did in order to “ escape,” many of them instead find a world heavenly still condensed in the social dynamics carried over from colonialism.

American domination - the only domination from which one never recovers. I mean from which one never recovers unscarred. " (Cesaire 77) As the ethnocentric country that we are, we like to criticize other nations in the way they handle their national issues but this is merely part of colonization, a skill that the United States as a whole has down to the most specific detail. By doing so the nation as a whole makes it that much easier for members of such colonized countries to undergo the process of which colonization becomes epidermalization- " The interiorisation of an inferiority complex based on socioeconomic inequalities. Such experience that all the characters in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* undergo and are in constant conflict with. As a nation of great power we possess many great attributes but lack immensely in the topic of equality of genders. Judging rulers of other countries such as Chavez, Castro and Hitler, when these rulers had so much more to offer their woman in comparison to the United States.

Although they committed crimes of which none are applaud for, what we don't like to state and teach is that in spite of all this " wrong", women in these particular countries received the support and were asked to better themselves and contribute to the economical development of their own nation. " By any standards, the position of women in Cuba ranks among the highest indices of equality of treatment and opportunities. " (*Women In Cuba*) In Venezuela Chavez receives the support of thousands of women, both in government and outside. Tania Diaz, governing party candidate for the capital district and previously minister of communications, said the aim of the activity was to support the president.... Since the government came to power women's opportunities for development and for participation in

Venezuelan society had multiplied. " (Pearson) While in Hitler's world, women were encouraged to train and become strong in order to become competitive with the male population and thus take part in the advancement of the Nazi nation. Hitler provided places for the female youth to learn and support each other in such advancements.

This youth group was called the League of German Girls, founded in 1930. An important part of life in the League of German Girls was to help the girls build character, and to prepare them for what were supposed to be their future tasks within the Nazi Volksgemeinschaft, or people's community, by getting them involved in programs that were for the "good of the people" (Chris Crawford and Stephan Hansen) Empowering women was something that was done in these nations, had these nations although accused of being some of the most dehumanizing, underdeveloped societies, have more opportunity and support for all of their women citizens.

Allowing them to become just as competitive in the work force and every other aspect of society. While in America the gap between male and female equality is still so spread, and even more so the gap between male and an ethnic female. The power of oppression towards women as a result of colonialism and how these power dynamics carry over into our modern society is something that we must begin to shift. That although America tries to escape from being called a colonizer, we have become victims of our own poison. " Domestic and foreign spaces are closer than we think, and that the dynamics of imperial expansion cast them into jarring proximity. (Kaplan 1)

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